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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [HO](#)  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ZELAYA'S UNGA SPEECH LONG ON LEFTIST  
RHETORIC, SHORT ON SUBSTANCE

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 1774

Classified By: Political Counselor Alexander Margulies. Reason: 1.4(d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In his address to the UN General Assembly on 9/18, President Jose Manuel "Mel" Zelaya employed religious and traditional leftist Latin American rhetoric in what appeared, in the Honduran context, to be an implicit condemnation of U.S. foreign policies promoting democracy and free commerce. The previous week Zelaya warmed up for the UNGA by lauding Bolivia's Evo Morales, suggesting that the economic policies of Argentina's Nestor Kirchner's are an example to be studied, and blasting the "Washington Consensus" as a failure. In a 9/22 press conference, however, the President insisted that his criticisms were not aimed at anyone in particular, but rather at all those who violate free commerce, using the European Union's raising of its banana tariff as an example. Zelaya has a habit of tailoring his remarks to what he thinks his specific audience wants to hear, and shows no/no hesitation in contradicting himself. Consequently, while we need to keep in mind what he says, our main focus remains on what he does. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Zelaya began opening up the leftist rhetoric throttle on 9/11, at a UNDP conference on Politics and Development in Honduras. There the President stated that the "Washington Consensus" has "failed," and that new options need to be explored. He suggested that the policies adopted by Kirchner in Argentina were examples that could be followed.

¶3. (U) Two days later, following a meeting in Guatemala with President Berger, Nicaraguan President Bolanos and Bolivia's Morales, Zelaya again lauded Kirchner for having "brought an economic revolution that really is worthy of observation from this latitude and worthy to be learned from." He also praised Morales for being, "a most important historical symbol since the discovery of America, the most authentic indigenous representative that has arrived through free elections to exercise leadership over a country." Zelaya, however, did take pains to distance Honduras' petroleum policies from those of Bolivia, insisting that his government would not/not nationalize the property of multinational oil companies.

¶4. (U) Zelaya's UNGA address opened by lamenting the great differences between the different "latitudes" (COMMENT: A reference to the North-South divide. END COMMENT) of the "immense necessities of the people, the contrasts in poverty, the drums of war, nuclear threats, and cruel situations." He then went on to condemn:

-- "The social breaches that, far from diminishing, have grown in the last decades;"

-- The "Commercial tyrannies" that "many times are more cruel" than "political, ideological and religious tyrannies;"

-- Those that "today want to sell us a free market policy, that in the end turns out to be an impious, insensible, and protectionist" policy, instead of one that "opens doors to a social logic and a social market, where freedom serves not only for investors forgetting (...) the most vulnerable groups;" and

-- The attitude that there should only be protection for "investors and big capital," ignoring the need that vulnerable groups have for protection;

15. (U) Zelaya called for a free market, "with ethics," and for a globalized world that, "respects the identity, patriotism, dignity and sovereignty of the peoples." He denounced, "the Pharisaism and the double talk and the double morality of those who proclaim and promote the solution of our problems with democracy and free commerce, but capture and kidnap the concepts of internal and foreign spaces and monopolic and oligarchic systems of privilege," that lead to, "hunger, unemployment, indifference and exclusion." He then singled out, "those who proclaim a false free commerce that deepens poverty and pretend to tell us that the erratic mirage of remittances that we accept naturally, but are an export of our labor force."

16. (U) Following a brief homage to notable North, Central and South American historical figures -- Lincoln, Sucre, San Martin, Marti, Zapata, Torrijos, and Honduras' own Francisco Morazan -- along with the recitation of a Pablo Neruda poem on the latter, Zelaya proclaimed that, "Today is not the end

of history, but the beginning for humanity." He vowed that, "we will continue fighting for our food security, our energy independence (COMMENT: A reference to the GOH's controversial oil import monopolization proposal. END COMMENT), social security, and an economy at the service of the market, at the service of the people."

17. (U) In his conclusion, Zelaya suddenly dropped his confrontational language regarding free markets, exclusion and exploitation, declaring that, "Central America is opening to the world, so that the world opens to Central America. We are ready for investment and tourism, for investment in different areas of our economy and society." The CAFTA nations, he stressed, "are a bridge to a free world, a better world."

18. (U) Zelaya held a press conference on 9/22, following his return from New York, to publicize his UNGA speech (news coverage of which was lost in the media circus surrounding the visa revocation/denial of entry of ex-President Rafael Callejas - Reftel). The President stated that he is the "best defender of the democratic system of free commerce," noting that he himself came from the private sector and had discussed how to ensure free commerce at length with the Ambassador. In these conversations, Zelaya continued, "we have delved into the weaknesses of free commerce in Central America. Thus, when I arrive at a United Nations forum and speak that we have to take off the mask and open opportunities for all, I am not referring to anyone with a name, but to all, to those who violate and do not want to practice (free commerce). For example, this year the European Union doubled its tariff on Honduran bananas because they want to protect their African colonies. Do you believe that this is free commerce?"

19. (C) COMMENT: A well-placed source told us that Zelaya's UNGA speech was purely his own work; that he drafted it just before he took the podium after rejecting two drafts prepared by his private secretary and by Foreign Minister Milton Jimenez. We do not/not pretend to understand Zelaya's thought processes or to try and make sense of his often wildly contradictory comments. We note that the Honduran President has the habit of repeating the last thing he heard,

and of tailoring his remarks to what he perceives his audience wants to hear. Consequently, while we take note of his statements, we have found it more useful to concentrate on what Zelaya does than on what he says. END COMMENT.  
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